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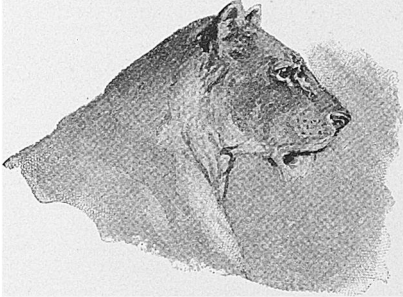
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SUGGESTIONS OF SOLITUDE

BY FRANK H. VIZETELLY

With original illustrations by R. Veenfliet.



How little do we realize the pleasures of solitude ! There is no company in a crowd, and faces, well—faces are often nothing more than a gallery of pictures. Talk ! Under all talk that is worth anything, there is something infinitely superior—silence. Nothing can equal the golden eloquence of sweet silence, silence more musical than song ; but such silence is only to be met far away from

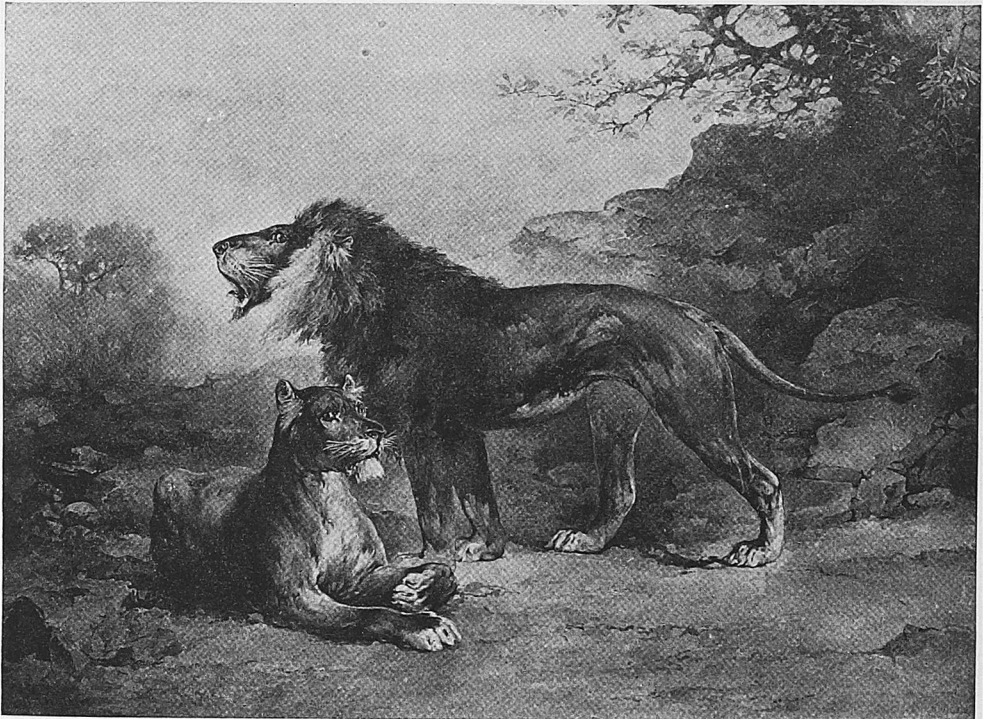
the strife of this world, beneath the shade of woodland, in the desert far and wide, in the wildest confines of nature, or in the spaces of the ocean green. Silence everywhere means solitude ; solitude, peace ; peace, calm ; and calm, rest.

“ Rest is the fitting Of self to its sphere.”

O Solitude, what charms thou hast in store, and how wide is thy reach ! There is no wilderness where thou art not. Man, thoughtless, thankless, inconsistent—

“ Wouldst thou view the lion's den ?
Search afar from haunts of men
Where the reed-encircled rill

Oozes from the rocky hill,
By its verdure far descried
'Mid the desert brown and wide.”

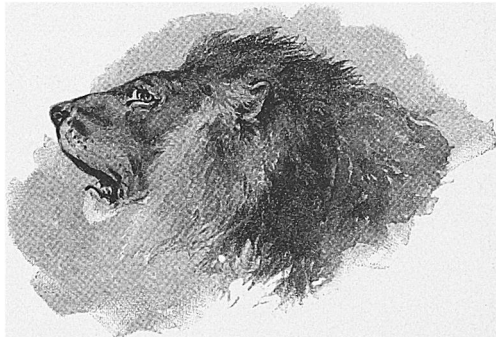


“ WOULDST THOU VIEW THE LION'S DEN ? ”

It is there, away, "out of the world," thou wilt find it; for the king of beasts delights in solitude and rejoices with his kind where the human foot never intrudes.

The sage Plato has said, "Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god." Yet there are times when solitude is our best society; it is the nurse of enthusiasm, and in nature presents us with great opportunities for self-entertainment:

"Dear Solitude, the soul's best friend,
That man acquainted with himself dost
make,
And all his Maker's wonders to intend,
With Thee I here converse at will,
And would be glad to do so still,
For it is Thou alone that keep'st the soul
awake."



Come away to the woods, let us rejoice under the canopy of heaven in the most sequestered nook that we can penetrate. Can your imagination in its wildest creations boast such hues as here surround us? Can it blend them as skilfully? No, my friend, no! for Nature is the art of God.

"Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives to every flower;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads through dewy meads."

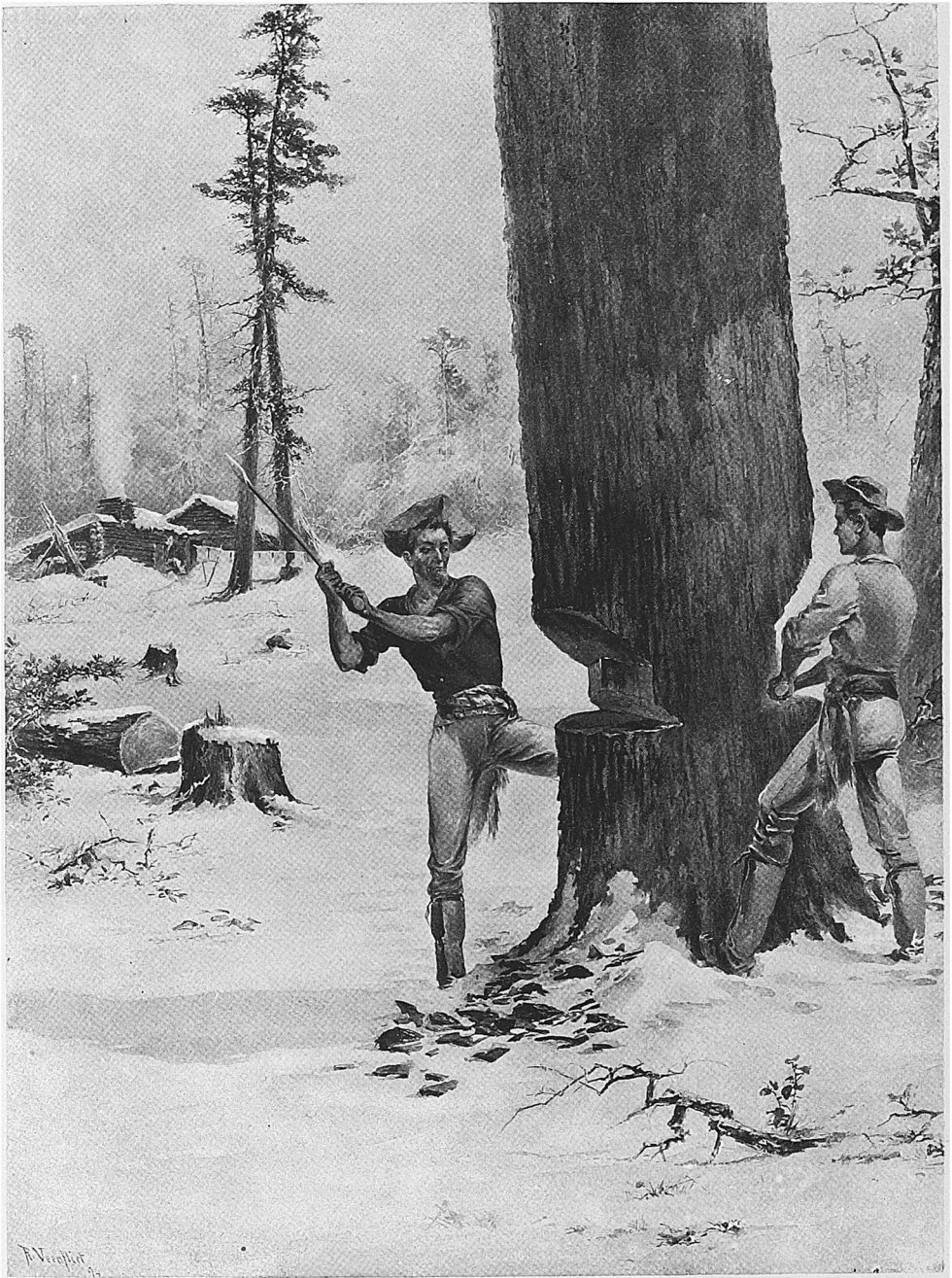


"THE DUN DEER COME DOWN TO DRINK"

Here, beneath the pleasant shade of branching trees, beside a babbling brook, where in the early hours of the morning the dun deer come down to drink, and the heron poises statuesque with uplifted spear-like beak until the sun steals over the treetops — here let us rest a while and commune with ourselves in silent enjoyment of nature.

No sound is uttered, yet what sweet harmony prevails. O Solitude, here are exemplified the charms that sages have found in thee! But, alas, here we cannot tarry, and perhaps it is as well, for to be ever alone would be as bad, in the long run, as to be never alone.

Now winter comes to rule the varied year. The stillness of summer, at best, is only partial and comparative; but now silence reigns supreme, and nowhere more profoundly than in



"WHEN WINTRY DAYS ARE DARK AND DREAR,
AND ALL THE FOREST WAYS GROW STILL"

the snow-buried forests, save when the loggers make it echo with their ringing blows. Yet what delight of *comfort* one can take at this season, when the snow is shut out and he can sit alone, safe from the storm, and muse or do the thing

he likes to do. It was of such comfort that John H. Boner was thinking when he wrote :

"When wintry days are dark and drear
And all the forest ways grow still,
When gray snow-laden clouds appear
Along the bleak horizon hill,
When cattle all are snugly penned
And sheep go huddling close together,

When steady streams of smoke ascend
From farm-house chimneys—in such weather
Give me. . . .

A great log-house, a great hearthstone,
A cheering pipe of cob or briar,
And a red, leaping light 'ood fire."



"THE SOBER HERD THAT LOWED TO MEET THEIR YOUNG,
THE NOISY GEESE THAT GABBLED O'ER THE POOL"

Wisdom seeks solitude, for here contemplation is her kindest nurse, and the seer can give freer play to his thoughts.

"Thrice happy he who by some shady grove
Far from the clamorous world, doth live his own
Though solitary, who is not alone
But doth converse with that Eternal Love."

The heart, betimes, grows weary of winter, and with returning spring rejoices at the sun's sweet light. Soon again the meadows roll and swell in billowy waves, bearing like foam upon their crests a sea of daisies, a patch of crimson clover, or a haze of golden-rod. Spring unlocks the flowers to paint the laughing soil, and Nature hangs her green mantle on every tree. Summer returns, and through the light and air a clearer calm comes to us.

Now of all hours is the appointed time to seek the blessings of rural retirement. What immeasurable happiness and contentment is his who passes his days away from the world's excitements, embowered within rustic surroundings. The feeling



A DIANA OF THE PERIOD

of rest and blissful content that these surroundings convey act upon us as a charm.

In exquisite melody Goldsmith sang of these rural joys—

“ Though poor the peasant's hut, his feast though small,
He sees his little lot the lot of all ;
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,
To shame the meanness of his humble shed ;
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal
To make him loathe his vegetable meal ;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting fits him to the soil.
Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose,
Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes ;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep,
Or drives his venturous ploughshare to the steep ;
Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day.”

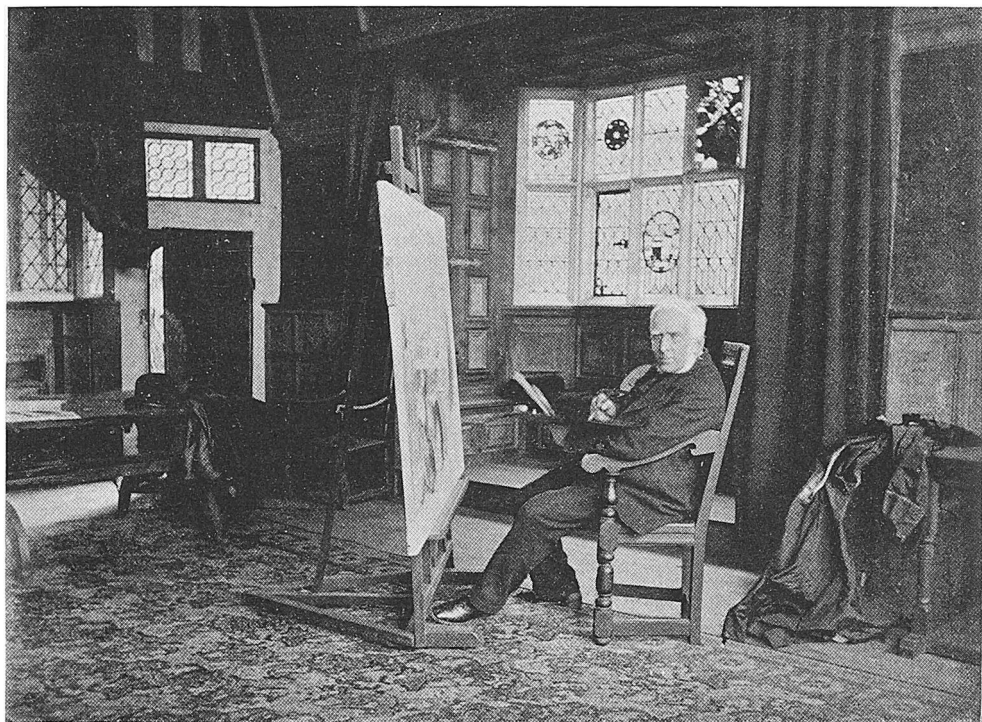
As eventide slowly draws its curtains around, and the cattle weary of their browsing sink to the ground to rest, how grateful is it to hear,

“ The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool.”

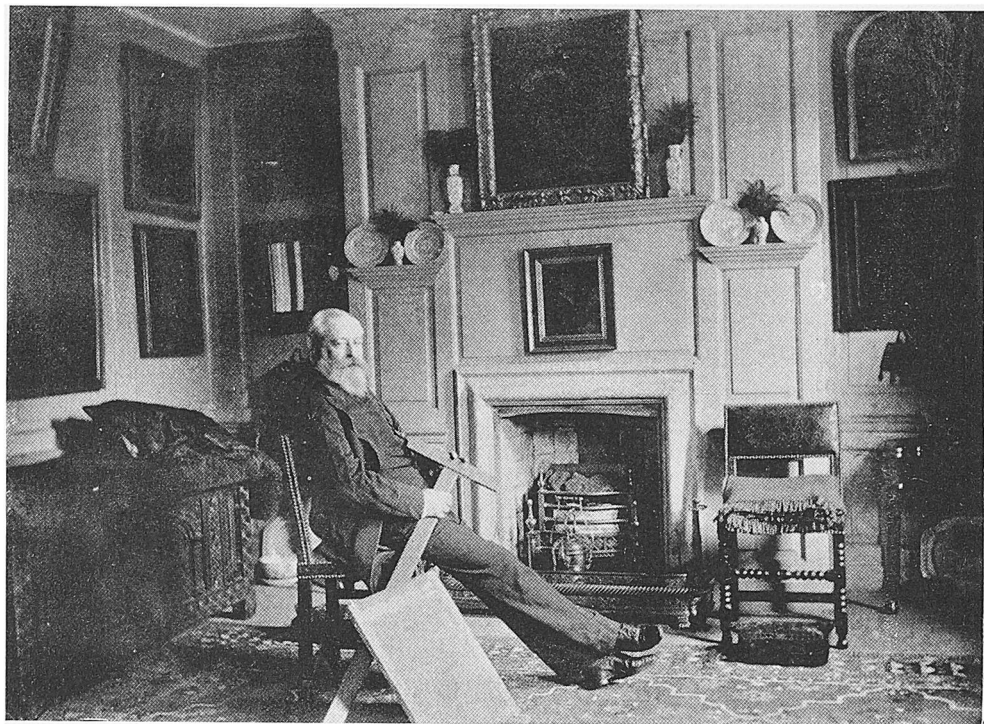
Truly, there is as much sweetness in rustic seclusion as there is pleasure in the pathless woods, where the doubts and fears that stir our hearts often drive us to soliloquize. Threading the maze of woodland, seeking rest from the torments of love, many a maiden fair emulates the intrepid, unwearied Huntress of Arcadia ; and with rifle in hand aimlessly roams o'er grassy height and wooded dell from morn to dewy eve, but she journeys alone and yet thinks it not solitude.

“ There is pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.”





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